

## NEVADA STICKLEAF

*Mentzelia dispersa* S. Wats.

plant symbol = MEDI

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center



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### Alternate Names

Nevada sandseed, Nevada blazingstar

### Uses

**Ethnobotanic:** The seeds of Nevada stickleaf are relished by the Washoe, Utah Southern Paiute, Western Shoshone, and the Kawaiisu--tribes of California and the Great Basin. Its rich flavor is reputed to taste like peanut butter. It is gathered when the seed is ripe and the plants have begun to die back in June, July, or early August depending upon elevation. If the plants are still green, it is too early to harvest. Traditionally, the plant was beaten with a seedbeater and the seeds dropped into a seed-gathering basket. Today the plant is tapped with a flat stick and the seeds drop into a pan or on a cloth that is laid under the plant. The plant can also be uprooted and shaken and beaten onto a canvas tarp. The seeds are winnowed to remove the chaff. A gentle breeze makes a good seed cleaning wind.

Today the seeds are placed into a frying pan and lightly roasted on the stove, emitting an aroma not unlike peanut butter. In former times, the seeds were parched with live coals skillfully shaken in a flat basket tray. Next the seeds are ground on a portable

metate into a very fine powder. The flour can then be rolled into balls and eaten. Among the Washoe, the flour is mixed with a little wheat flour and water is added, then the mixture is cooked and made into a rich soup similar in consistency to gravy. It is then eaten with cooked meat. In former times, dahal soup was often shared among the Washoe during storytelling events. The seed of some *Mentzelia* species are eaten by the Gambel quail (*Lophortyx gambelii*) in the Southwest U.S.

### Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

### Description

**General:** Loasa Family (Loasaceae). This annual plant reaches 4 dm. in height and it grows up to 2,500-m. elevation. The small yellow flowers have a basal orange spot and the petals are 2-4 mm. long. The capsules produce grain-like, greyish-black seeds. The leaves are sticky and vary from having entire edges to small teeth. When looking across a landscape, the white stems are easy to spot in the sunlight.

### Distribution

For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site. It ranges from California, north to Washington, and east to the Rocky Mountains and south into New Mexico.

### Establishment

**Adaptation:** Acre upon acre of this plant germinates in sagebrush scrub after fire. It is an early successional species, one of the first to colonize burn sites, and then it disappears after several years. The plant grows in many plant community types.

**General:** Nevada stickleaf may be grown from seed planted into an area with full sunlight in November, in a well-drained gravelly to sandy soil and prior to the rainy season. A screen should be placed over the planted area, to keep the birds out. If the precipitation is late, water the area. In between rains, keep the area watered during the growing period.

### Management

With urban development the plant disappears. Prescribed burns could be conducted on various open

sites to heighten production of this plant and facilitate the continuance of this remarkable tradition.

### **Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

Please check the Vendor Database, expected to be on-line through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking on Plant Materials. Field gathering is the usual source, since commercial sources are unknown.

### **References**

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Edited: 05dec00 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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